

2006 Report from the Legislature To the constituents of the 4th Legislative District

Rep. Lynn Schindler

Olympia Office:

419 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7984

Email:

Schindler.Lynn@leg.wa.gov

Committees:

Local Government, *Ranking Republican*
Housing
State Government Operations & Accountability
Transportation

Internet page:

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/schindler.htm>



Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline):

1-800-635-9993

Contact me

Thank you for letting me represent you in Olympia. It is an honor to serve you. Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time this summer. I am always glad to hear from you.

Dear friends & neighbors,

The 2006 legislative session is now history. We completed the 60 day session on March 9th – one day early. That's good news, but the biggest news is the out-of-control spending introduced by the majority party.

When I traveled to Olympia in January, we had \$1.6 billion in surplus revenue. When we left we had spent \$1.3 billion. Spending like this, especially in a supplemental budget year, can't be sustained and that worries me. I will be discussing this and other issues inside this newsletter.

I've been getting a lot of e-mails and letters and I'm trying my best to answer all of them. Your points on legislative issues are well taken and I appreciate every one of them, even those who disagreed with me. As I travel around the district this summer, I look forward to visiting with you and hearing your thoughts on the events of this session.

Sincerely,

Rep. Lynn Schindler

2006 To the constituents of the 4th Legislative District



Spending your tax dollars wisely

The Democrat-controlled House introduced the largest spending increase in state history. Spending was up 17.7% over the last biennial budget. The short session is for making minor corrections to the 2005 budget, not for packing it full of new spending, yet that is just what the majority party did. Instead of a maintenance-level budget, they added \$468 million in new spending.

We all heard the projections of extra state revenue of \$1.6 billion. The extra money should have been put into a reserve account for a "rainy day." Instead it was moved into "special accounts." The Democrats call them "savings accounts." I say they are simply a way to defer spending. Putting the money into these special accounts raised the spending lid of I-601, the initiative you passed to limit government spending. If the majority party truly wanted to save that money, they would have left it in a reserve account. I proposed adding a rainy-day fund to the state constitution and requiring a three-fifths vote of both chambers before this reserve could be spent. This legislation was not well-received by the majority.

Budget experts predict this uncontrolled spending cannot be sustained in

the years ahead and sets us up for tax increases. I could not support this lack of restraint and voted against the operating budget.

I did support a bill (HJR 4220) that would create a rainy-day fund; yet it never made it out of committee. I also supported HJR 4209 that would have mandated a two-thirds majority vote of each legislative chamber in order to raise your taxes. However, this bill never made it out of committee either. The mantra this session seemed to be "spend it now."

I believe the state should save extra money and prepare for future budget deficits, should the economy take a downturn. This session would have been a great time to create a permanent "rainy day" fund - a provision to the state constitution that would require lawmakers to put a percentage of money away every budget cycle to protect the state during tough economic times.

There will always be philosophical differences in terms of spending your tax dollars, yet I believe in funding all our essential state services, while looking for savings in the process. Government needs to be accountable for how your tax dollars are spent and I think our state can do a better job.

WASL testing

I supported finding alternatives to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), hopefully, to answer the many concerns you voiced about its subjectivity and lack of fairness. Students learn and test differently, so limiting them to one test instead of the many alternatives previously allowed, limits their opportunities to successfully move on.

I supported a bill such as HB 6475 that creates alternative assessments to the WASL and HB 2414 that sets up pilot programs in six school districts to use an assessment other than the WASL at the elementary level. However, let me be clear, I am not for lessening accountability. I am for a test that properly measures it.

Some of you told me that we needed alternatives for kids not wanting to go on to college. I voted for HB 2973 that provides graduation options for students that are involved in a technical education curriculum in school. This should help kids that want to work in the trades after graduation.



Keeping our neighborhoods safe

I supported two bills this legislative session that would toughen penalties for sex offenders and tighten monitoring of offenders already on the street. I supported "Jessica's Law Plus" (HB 2476), named for 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford, the Florida girl who was murdered by a sex offender in February 2005.

I also sponsored a "Two Strikes" reform bill. This bill makes the maximum sentence for all "two strike" sex offenses life in prison. It also adds a long list of offenses to the "two strike" list.

I believe we need to protect our neighborhoods. I supported this legislation because I want to make sure our families feel safe and ensure that the most serious sex offenders stay behind bars.

House Bill 2476 called for life in prison for forcible rape of a child involving a victim under age 12, and a 25-year sentence for first-degree rape involving a child age 12 to 15 or any victim who is developmentally disabled or a frail adult. It also called for GPS (global positioning satellite) monitoring of sex offenders and makes failure to register as a sex offender a felony.

Neither of these bills was allowed on the House floor for a vote. Instead, the majority introduced House Bill 3277 that was not as tough as Jessica's Law, but did make sentences stricter for most sex offenders. I voted in favor of this bill because I wanted to toughen the laws as much as this bill would allow.

I will continue to fight for tougher laws next session.



Rep. Schindler with Jessica Lunsford's father Mark Lunsford. Jessica's Law was named for his 9-year old daughter, killed by an unmonitored sex offender in Florida.



District Transportation Projects

North Spokane Corridor

I'm pleased to report that I was able to find new dollars to help out the North/South Corridor funding. The \$32 million is new money to fill in cost overruns due to rising costs of land and fuel. That was a lifesaver, for the money was going to come out of the \$152 million appropriated last budget cycle and that would have slowed the next phase.

You might recall that the North/South Corridor will create a highway link between U.S. 395 and I-90. This should help move freight traffic to I-90 without creeping through congested city streets.

It is an ongoing challenge to find funding for the remaining costs, estimated at \$1.8 billion. It's tough fighting against the huge appetite of the big three westside counties, but I'll keep working hard to secure the funding we need to complete this project.

I-90: Spokane to the Idaho border

Your tax money is paying for the I-90 expansion project from Spokane to the Idaho border. The Department of Transportation (DOT) has now started engineering work on the last two sections scheduled for expansion. Your nickel from the gas tax package in 2003 is paying for the work, along with federal matching funds.

Bigelow Gulch

Phase 2 of the Bigelow Gulch project (Freya to Argonne) should begin in Jan. 2007. It has been a special project to me and to all of those who have had loved ones injured or killed on the dangerous eight-mile stretch of curvy road.

2006 To the constituents of the the 4th Legislative District



Rep. Lynn Schindler

Property Rights

Eminent Domain

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo v New London* last year, many of you sent me e-mails and called on the telephone. You told me that you were outraged that the government could take private property and hide behind the statement, "it's for the public's use." Your outrage is well founded.

I supported House Bill 2854 that would have added language to our state constitution to narrowly define the definition of "public use." The bill would also allow the original property owner to buy their land back at the same purchase

price, if the government no longer needed it for the project for which it was purchased. This bill failed to get a hearing.

The majority party's response to not hearing the bill was that the words in the state constitution are sufficient to protect property owners. You only have to look at the Seattle Monorail project to see an example of why the wording in the constitution is not enough. Leaders of that project ran up \$110 million worth of debt buying private property for the "public's use" that was never completed.

A bill protecting private property and limiting government takings is essential and we will be reintroducing this bill next session.



PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

Representative Lynn Schindler

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper 